NORTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

Embedded Professional Development

Strategies and Resources for Implementation

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Embedded Professional Development
Strategies and Resources for Implementation

Action Research in the Classroom
Embedded Professional Development

Overview

Action research is a practice-based method of improving the quality of teaching through the use of research techniques. The teacher or instructor acts as a researcher by collecting data regarding their teaching strategies and techniques. The intent of action research is for the teacher (researcher) to review the data collected and use the results to make improvements to their instructional approaches.

By conducting action research in schools, educators are welcomed into an environment where they can reflect on their current teaching method and assess the strategies they use to teach. This often leads to teachers discovering new teaching ideas and strategies, exploring new teaching material, and applying these new concepts in their classroom. Next, teachers are able to reflect on these new teaching approaches and evaluate their effectiveness in the classroom. These reflections can be done individually or can be shared with others. Dependent on these reflections, teachers make changes to actual lesson or classroom curriculum.

School Scenario

The section below is taken from *Action Research: A Strategy for Instructional Improvement*. Reed, C. (2002).

Jeremy's third-grade teacher watched him out of the corner of her eye. Though he sat quietly reading, she knew that he could, and often did, erupt into loud, emotional displays. On this particular day, the eruption came just after recess. Inexplicably, Jeremy jumped up, swept papers off his desk, and with a loud roar, tipped the desk over. The teacher managed to get him out of the classroom and into the safety of the nurse's office while his classmates patiently straightened his desk and gathered his scattered belongings. Still, in spite of their practiced efficiency, a half-hour passed before the teacher could get the class settled and working again.

Totally frustrated with the repeated loss of teaching time and the months it takes to complete Special Education referrals, the teacher decided to try what she learned in an action research class. She did a little action research project on Jeremy:

First, the **question**: In this case, it was simple. What upsets Jeremy?

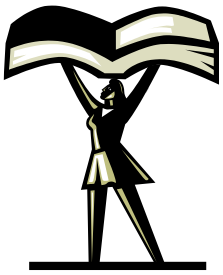
Next, **data collection**: It was a little tougher to decide how to collect information that might respond to the question. It was tempting to think of the problem as originating in the home, on the playground, or within his psychological make-up. But true as that may have been, knowing it didn't do much for the classroom. Perplexed, the teacher decided to make brief notes about what happened immediately before each disruption.

Then, **data analysis**: Several disruptions later, the teacher spread the collected data, which is the notes, across her desk, reading them over and over, looking for patterns. Suddenly, she had it.

The **findings**: Jeremy erupted when she passed out papers asking students to work on new concepts.

The **action plan**: Gently confronting Jeremy with the "evidence," led to information that earlier "interrogations" had not revealed. Jeremy tearfully confessed that he always felt afraid that he could not do the new assignment. Together, they worked up a plan. When the teacher passed out work on new concepts, she promised to hand Jeremy a "fun" paper to work on. Jeremy agreed to practice patience. Thereafter, the teacher first got the rest of the class working well, then went to Jeremy's desk and helped him with the new concept until they both felt that he understood what to do. And it worked! The disruptions diminished significantly until, finally, the teacher withdrew her recommendation for a Special Education referral.

The Process



The school scenario provides a sample of how the action research process can be applied to gather pertinent information in a classroom setting. Below are the steps that one would consider when implementing action research in the classroom.

1. Identify the question under study – There are three points to consider when writing your action research question. A.) The question should clearly identify what is going on in your classroom situation. B.) The question should be one that can be resolved through teacher action. For instance making changes to lessons, adjusting teaching strategies, etc. C.) The question should be practicable (consider reflecting on the time, effort, resources that may be required).

Sample questions may include, "How many of my students read outside the school day?" or "Are students' test scores higher when we role play our readings?"

2. Find information on your question – In order for you to adequately assess your question, you must find background information on the question that you are presenting.

3. Select research strategy – You may want to explore the various types of research strategies available to you, as well as what they entail as there is no one strategy that is best for data collection. You will want to select a strategy that will provide you the most information in regard to your question. In the school scenario, the teacher choose to collect information on one particular child. Depending on the question, it may be more applicable to collect information on the entire class or different groups of students.

4. Collect data – The next step is to collect data that is pertinent to your question. You may want to start with data that is already available to you (test scores, assignments, evaluations, portfolios). However, other information may also need to be obtained (surveys, class discussion). You will want to collect several different types of data to ensure that the results you are getting are consistent.

5. Analyze data – When analyzing the information you will be looking for patterns. As mentioned above, if a trend is found, you will want to see if that trend can be reproduced with other forms of data. This would reveal consistency in the results. If there is not enough information, it may be necessary to collect more data.

6. Review findings – After you analyze the data, the findings should become evident. It will be necessary to review these findings and gather more information (if necessary) to help interpret the results.

7. Develop a plan for action – Based on the results gathered from the data, you should plan to take action regarding these findings. In the school scenario, the teacher developed an individualized plan with the student to defray this student's outbursts. When examining options for your plan of action, you may want to evaluate the time and effort which may be required. For instance, if your question evaluated whether or not students scored higher when role playing, and the results from the data proved role playing had no impact on student scores, the action taken would replace role playing with an activity that allowed for students to increase their scores. This may require further research and preparation.

8. Share findings – As stated in the overview, action research can be individual or a group process. It is optional whether teachers want to discuss their findings with others.

Resources

- Learning Forward – http://learningforward.org
- Eisenhower Network – www.mathsciencenetwork.org
- Drawn to Science Education – www.drawntoscience.org/educators/action-research/classroom-action-research-1.html

This information was adapted from the following resources:

- *Action Research in Workplace Education*. Taylor. (2002).
- *Action Research: A Strategy for Instructional Improvement*. Reed, C. (2002).
- *Improving Teaching through Classroom Action Research*. Mettetal, G. (2002-2003).

Collaboratively Examining Student Work
Embedded Professional Development

Overview

Most often, teachers alone bare the burden of correcting papers, evaluating tests, and completing rubrics. When given the opportunity to examine student work collaboratively, teachers gain insight on the actual effectiveness of teacher instruction.

Collaboratively examining student work also allows teachers to better understand the process of student learning, develop better assignments for their students, make instructional changes to the curriculum, assist students in making greater achievements on their work, and develop a bird's eye view of what is happening inside the classroom.

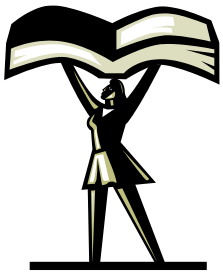
School Scenario

In *Student Work: This Focus for Staff Development Leads to Genuine Collaboration*, author Anne Lewis writes that when new content standard came about within the Monaca School District, most teachers simply put them in a drawer never to be looked at again.

However, one principal required her teachers to align the activities in their weekly lesson plans with the new standards. It was also required that samples of student work be submitted. The principal then met to discuss the standards and student work samples with the individual teachers. Questions such as, "What are you doing to challenge your students to work towards a higher level?" were asked of the teachers during these meetings.

What these teachers were experiencing was using student work as a basis for collaborative discussions about teaching and learning.

The Process



The information below was adapted from *What Story Does the Work Tell? A Resource of Curricular Units, Student Work, and Commentary by Philadelphia Teachers*. This document is available online at www.philaedfund.org.

1. **Select a team** – Gather a team, or small group, of teachers together.

2. **Select a piece of student work** – The student work sample should demonstrate a rich variety of students learning capabilities. It can be a work-in-progress, a final piece, or a document of a performance. Also collect the scoring guide or rubric used to assess this particular assignment. Be sure to have enough copies of the student work and assessment method for each of the team members. If possible, avoid using student work in which the student can be identified.

3. **Introduce the purpose of the study** – If someone in the group is not familiar with your unit of study, take a few minutes to introduce its overall purpose, the activities that have been conducted, and the work that has been generated. This will allow the group to evaluate the work more effectively.

4. **Align the activity to standard(s)** – Discuss and write down at least one standard you expected students to address and demonstrate in this activity. What did you expect the students to know and be able to do?

5. **Review the piece of student work** – Take a few minutes to look at the work as a group. Either read it aloud or let each person take a turn looking at it.

6. **Record observations** – Group members should write down observations about the work. Then write down comments and questions the group presents. First, allow each team member to comment individually and then share in turn.

7. Score student work with rubric or assessment measure – Use your scoring guide or rubric to assess the piece of work. If you do not yet have a scoring guide, review the standard you have identified and assess the work based on its criteria. (You might put together an informal rubric by doing this.)

8. Discuss results – The group should take a few minutes to discuss following questions:

- What do you see from your observations, comments, and questions that will help you assess students learning capabilities?
- How might these observations determine your next steps as a teacher?
- Do these observations tell you anything new about your unit of study or classroom activities?
- Was the method used to assess the assignment adequate?
- What changes would you make/recommend?

Resources

- Learning Forward – http://learningforward.org
- Looking Collaboratively at Student and Teacher Work – www.ccebos.org/pdf/LASW.pdf
- Looking at Student Work – www.lasw.org

This information was adapted from the following resources:

- Philadelphia Education Fund - www.philaedfund.org
- Education World – www.education-world.com
- *Student work: This Focus for Staff Development Leads to Genuine Collaboration*. Lewis, A. (1998).

Courses, Workshops, Institutes, Seminars with Follow Up
Embedded Professional Development

Overview

Teacher focused courses, workshops, institutes and seminars are great opportunities to get a variety of information that is specific to one topic or theme delivered by expert educational leaders. However, the downfall to these forms of professional development is that they are most often held outside of the school. The fact that the learning happens outside the school has both positive and negative aspects. The positive aspects are it allows for in-depth study and practice of the particular subject area or concept, it allows for educators to interact with one another, and it provides a safe environment to practice or implement the new idea or technique. The negative aspects are that it is a one-size-fits-all approach and it has limited follow up or requirements for follow through.

However, if used correctly and incorporated or aligned to other professional development initiatives happening at the school, courses, workshops, institutes, and seminars can provide an effective form of professional development.

"Training without follow up is malpractice."
— Stephanie Hirsch
National Staff Development Council
June 1997

School Scenario

Almost all educators have attended a course, workshop, institute, or seminar in which they either wondered their purpose for attending or questioned their ability to apply the concept to their own classroom.

Consider this, a group of teachers, all from the same school, attend a workshop on how to increase parent involvement through family activities at the school. The teachers went back to their school with a wealth of information, ideas, and resources on how to implement such a program at their school. At the workshop, the group scheduled a time and place to meet to discuss putting this into practice.

As luck would have it, a mandatory all staff meeting was scheduled for the same afternoon they planned to meet. The teachers had to reschedule. Weeks passed before they discussed the group meeting again. Before they knew it, months had gone by.

At the end of the school year, as the teachers were cleaning their classrooms, each teacher who attended the workshop created a file entitled *Parent Involvement – Family Activities* with intentions to use it the following school year.

The Process

In the article *Getting the Most Out of In-service Workshops author* Meg Bozzone has several suggestions as to how to make courses, workshops, institutes, and seminars more effective.

1. Register for workshop
Before registering for outside courses, workshops, institutes, or seminars, consider the following questions:

- In what area do I want to help my students learn more? What area will most impact student achievement?
- Am I willing to change how I teach by implementing this new strategy?
- Does this workshop align to our district/school goals?

- Does research support what this workshop is claiming? What evidence is available to prove this method has been successfully implemented and caused changes in student performance?
- How will my initiatives be supported? If the workshop itself does not provide follow up, consider establishing your own method of follow up with your colleagues or others attending.

2. Attend the workshop

While attending the workshop, teachers should be constantly evaluating and brainstorming how the information being presented can apply to their classroom.

3. Research new practice/strategy

Depending on the quality, time and duration of the program, teachers may need to obtain more information as to how this might work in their classroom setting. If necessary, further research or training may be needed.

4. Implement new practice/strategy

After the workshop has concluded, teachers should attempt to implement the new strategy or program. Be prepared for anything. Teachers experience both successes and failures when implement new initiatives for the first time. Don't be discouraged, if it doesn't work as planned, try and try again.

5. Reflection

After implementing the new strategy or practice, teachers should reflect. Be sure to not only reflect on the implementation, but the original workshop as well. Consider the following questions:

- Is what I'm trying to do working? Is it working for me? For my students? Can I modify aspects to better meet the needs of my students?
- Are these the results I had hoped for? Is it too early to tell? How long should I wait before I should start seeing results?

6. Follow Up

The key to making outside courses, workshops, institutes, and seminars effective is the follow up. Consider these questions:

- Ask yourself if the follow up has been sufficient?
- Did you meet with workshop participants during the implementation and reflection processes?
- Have you compared results with other workshop participants?
- Who have you relied on for assistance?
- Do you need a stronger network for support?

Resources

- New Teacher Project – www.tntp.org
- *Getting the Most Out of In-service Workshops.* Bozzone, M.

This information was adapted from the following resources:

- *Getting the Most Out of In-service Workshops.* Bozzone, M.

Instructional Coaches
Embedded Professional Development

Overview

Instructional coaches (A.K.A.—standards coaches, content coaches, teacher coaches, guides on the side) work with both new and experienced teachers to facilitate change in instructional practice. Instructional coaches are most often veteran teachers who have demonstrated an excellence in their ability to adapt their teaching practices to meet the needs of their students.

Instructional coaches must be knowledgeable about content area, the mission of the school/district, effective teaching strategies, student learning, and research supported practices.

It is the responsibility of the coach to assist teachers in creating standards based classrooms and develop quality teaching styles and programs which will, in effect, raise student achievement. These coaches often assist existing teachers with improving classroom instruction, management and lesson design. Instructional coaches also provide feedback in a variety of methods including: showing effective practices, modeling, observing, team-teaching, and guided instruction.

The most important thing to remember is instructional coaches are <u>not</u> there to evaluate teacher performance, but rather to provide continuous <u>support</u> for instructional improvement. Implementing instructional coaches can play a major role in facilitating school's/district's professional development initiatives.

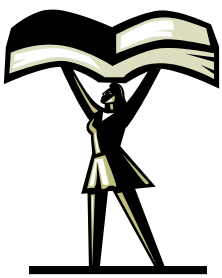
School Scenario

Mr. Johnson, an experienced teacher, was one of many having difficulty implementing the district's new approach to reading. When his principal approached him about having one of the district's reading coaches come to model and observe some lessons, he was hesitant. Mr. Johnson was uncomfortable with the thought of having another adult in the room, not to mention someone who was considered an "expert" on the subject. Even with these reservations, he decided to welcome the opportunity.

The district's instructional reading coach first came to observe the lessons Mr. Johnson was teaching. After a few observations, the two of them met to discuss areas in which Mr. Johnson was uncomfortable and discuss the insight on what the coach has observed.

The next day, the instructional coach modeled a lesson for Mr. Johnson to show how to appropriately implement the methods of this new reading initiative, in particular, those areas in which Mr. Johnson struggled. During the lesson, Mr. Johnson took notes and brainstormed how he will implement this lesson with another set of students.

The Process



The process a school/district may take with instructional coaches varies greatly. Rather than outlining a process that a school/district may use, below you will find information regarding the role of the instructional coach. This information was adapted from *Instructional Coaches Make Progress Through Partnership* by Knight, J. (2004). This article can be found online at www.nsdc.org/library/publications/jsd/knight252.cfm.

1. Meet with departments or teams – Instructional coaches begin the change process by meeting with each school department or team. The instructional coach explains that teachers have an opportunity to learn about new research-validated teaching practices designed to make classes more accessible or to help students become better learners. The instructional coach then asks teachers to indicate their interest on an evaluation form.

2. Meet one-on-one with interested teachers – The instructional coach schedules a series of one-on-one or small group meetings to identify what research teachers are interested in learning about, and to discuss how research can be translated into practice. School culture is often opposed to change initiatives, but every school has individuals interested in new ideas.

3. Work on real content – Teachers meet with instructional coaches anywhere from once or twice a semester to once a week during a semester, depending on the nature of the strategy being introduced. Each meeting focuses on real applications of the research-based interventions, and theoretical discussion is kept to a minimum, at least initially. For example, a coach and teacher discussing how to organize a unit might develop a graphic organizer the teacher can use right away.

4. Model lessons in each teacher's classroom – A major part of an instructional coach's work is modeling initiatives so a teacher can see how an approach works in their classroom. Instructional coaches often model the first lesson in a sequence so teachers can better understand how to make the approach work. "Teachers need to see it," said Barnes. "They need to see you modeling, and that gives them insight into other things that might need to be done - keeping kids on task, redirecting inappropriate behavior, giving feedback, recognizing kids when they're doing great, keeping the room positive and energized. ... There's an art to teaching, and a lot of that art is hard to learn from reading teachers manuals."

5. Pay for teachers' time – For teachers to enthusiastically commit extra time to any change effort, they should be paid. Paying teachers demonstrates respect, yet teachers in the project frequently turn down the honorarium. They simply appreciate the recognition that their time is being taken.

6. Make it as easy as possible – If an intervention works and is easy to implement, our experience suggests teachers will use it. Instructional coaches should provide all the materials teachers need to implement a strategy or routine, to help teachers transfer research into practice. For example, instructional coaches give teachers a cardboard box called "strategy in a box" filled with everything the teacher needs to implement an intervention--overheads, learning sheets, readings, teaching behavior checklists, and instructional manuals. Coaches also might write lesson plans, help with student evaluations, create overheads, or co-teach to give teachers additional time. "Part of our goal is to release teachers from burdensome, mundane things so they can spend time thinking about being a learner, to make changes to bring out critical teaching behaviors," Brasseur said. "(Teachers) need to get to the point of thinking about teaching."

7. Respond quickly to teacher requests – Since teachers are pressed to organize classes, evaluate students, and keep on top of their content, they require material quickly. Instructional coaches must reply immediately when teachers request new materials. Even a few days' delay may kill the opportunity for implementation. "I take care of as much as I can right within the hour," said Barnes. "Too many times, people put you on hold. When we get right back to our teachers, we show them we care about them."

Resources

- Learning Forward – http://learningforward.org
- *Instructional Coaching – Professional Development Strategies that Improve Instruction* - The Annenberg Institute – http://annenberginstitute.org/sites/default/files/product/270/files/InstructionalCoaching.pdf

This information was adapted from the following resource:

- *Instructional Coaches Make Progress Through Partnership*. (Kinght, J.) (2004).

Lesson Study
Embedded Professional Development

Overview

Lesson study is a practice that is currently used throughout Japan and is making its way to the United States. During lesson studies teachers work collaboratively to plan, observe, and refine a particular lesson. The actual process of the lesson study is what impacts teacher learning and provides for professional development opportunity.

Lesson studies appeal naturally to teachers who long to collaborate, learn about practices, and facilitate their own professional growth. These studies consist of various professional development techniques including: peer observation, ongoing collaboration, examining student thoughts, and examining student work.

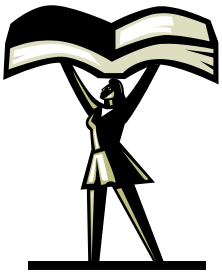
Essentially, lesson studies focus on teaching rather than on teachers.

School Scenario

The quote below is taken from *A Deeper Look at Lesson Study*. Lewis, C., Perry, R. & Hurd, J. (2004).

Six elementary school teachers uncover an interesting paradox in the data that they have just collected during a 4th grade mathematics lesson on pattern growth. Most students correctly filled out a table that related the number of tiles in a pattern to the pattern's perimeter, but many students were unable to express this information in words or an equation. These data suggest that the table "spoon-fed" the students. The teachers–the one teaching the lesson and the five observing it—redesign the lesson, eliminating the worksheet that contained the table. Two days later, another of the six lesson study team members presents the redesigned lesson to a different class of 4th graders while her colleagues once again observe. She discovers that students grasp the pattern as they work at organizing the data themselves instead of just filling in a table that organizes the data for them. One team member reflects on the experience of planning, teaching, observing, revising and reteaching the lesson.

The Process



The section below is quoted from *A New View of Professional Development*. Stepanek, J. (2001).

1. Focusing the lesson – The lesson study usually focuses on a broad, schoolwide goal such as "independent thinking" or "love of learning." The teachers help determine these broad goals, and they choose the specific topic of the lesson. The topic often comes from a problematic concept that the teachers have observed in their own classrooms.

2. Planning the lesson – The teachers research the topic of the study, reading books and articles about the problem they are working on. They collaborate to develop the lesson plan, and a draft is presented to the school staff for feedback.

3. Teaching the lesson – One teacher from the team presents the lesson in his classroom. The other teachers observe the lesson very closely, taking notes on what the students and the teacher are doing and saying. The lesson may be documented through video, photographs, audiotapes, and student work.

4. Reflecting and evaluating – The group meets after school to discuss the lesson and their observations. The teacher who presented the lesson speaks first, outlining how he thinks the lesson went and identifying problems he observed. The other teachers contribute their own observations and suggestions.

5. Revising the lesson – Based on the problems identified in the first presentation, the study group makes changes in the lesson. Changes are usually based on student misunderstandings that the teachers noticed during their observation. The group may meet several times to improve the lesson and prepare for a second implementation, although sometimes the teachers decide that they do not need to reteach it.

6. Teaching the revised lesson – The lesson may be presented again to a different group of students. The same person may teach the lesson a second time or a different teacher may try it out. Often, all the teachers in the school are invited to observe the revised lesson.

7. Reflecting and evaluating – The whole faculty will participate in the second debriefing session, which may cover more general issues of learning and instruction. There is usually an outside expert working with the lesson study group, who speaks last during the debriefing.

8. Sharing results – Teachers share the lessons they develop through this process, creating a bank of well-crafted lessons to draw upon. The teachers will often publish a report about their study, including the teachers' reflections and a summary of group discussions. In addition, teachers from outside the school may be invited to observe the teachers present the lesson.

Resources

- Lesson Study Research Group – www.tc.columbia.edu/lessonstudy/
- Lesson Study Group at Mills College – www.lessonresearch.net

This information was adapted from the following resources:
- *A New View of Professional Development*. Stepanek, J. (2001). NWREL Northwest Teacher, Spring 2001, p.2-11.
- *A Deeper Look at Lesson Study*. Lewis, C., Perry, R. & Hurd, J. (2004). Educational Leadership, February 2004, p.18-22.

Peer Coaching – Peer Reviewing
Embedded Professional Development

Overview

Peer coaching and peer reviewing are professional development strategies in which educators consult with one another, discuss teaching practices, share teaching experiences, observe classrooms, and support each other in the education of students.

Peer coaching, usually consists of two to three teachers who get together to share, reflect upon and refine their teaching practices. This is usually done through conversations and small group meetings. By utilizing the feedback from one another, the teachers learn and grow together to better the instruction that is delivered to their students.

Peer reviewing is similar to peer coaching, however peer reviewers usually consult with new or veteran teachers who are in need of assistance. Together these individuals observe and share lessons, ideas, skills, strategies, and materials. The peer reviewer usually provides feedback and recommendations regarding instruction. An element of peer reviewing that is not part is peer coaching is formal evaluation. Peer reviewing consists of a formal evaluation which reflects information regarding the experience. This evaluation is most often given to the struggling teacher's supervisor.

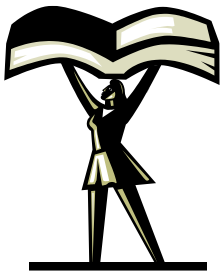
School Scenario

The quote below is taken from *Teaching to Win*. McQueen, C. (2001).

Imagine, if you will, members of an athletic team who rarely practice their knowledge and skills of the game with other members of their team. Their only concern is the final score, and they never evaluate their professional performances. Imagine these athletic players without a coach and without a desire to solicit feedback from their team or even the audience for whom they play. Would these team members improve as players or simply stagnate and eventually die out as viable competitors?

It is truly difficult to imagine players who fit this description, especially successful ones. Yet this scenario plays out daily in many of the nation's schools. Teachers, isolated in their classrooms, give daily performances with no practice, no feedback other than test scores, and no coach or teammates to give adequate and timely evaluations.

The Process



The peer coaching and peer reviewing information below was taken from the ASCD website at www.ascd.org.

Setting up and implementing peer coaching and peer review programs is not difficult, but can be time consuming. Indeed, time is a crucial factor. Coaches and consulting teachers need ongoing training and support. Pairs or teams of teachers must have time to meet, research, and collaborate. Teachers also need time in their class schedules to observe their peers during the school day. Peer coaches and reviewers often receive a stipend for the extra time commitment involved.

Selecting partners can be a sensitive issue—some programs encourage self-selection, whereas others recommend a more structured approach. Trust between and among peers is an essential component. Because most coaching and review strategies involve some form of classroom observation, teachers need both a pre-conference and post-conference. During the pre-conference they meet to discuss the lesson purpose, the classroom dynamics, and what to look for during the observation. During the post-conference they review the lesson, model new strategies, and collaborate on improvement.

The success of peer coaching and peer review often depends on the environment of the school. Is there a climate of collegiality? What has been the traditional review process? Do teachers feel comfortable taking risks and asking for help? Is there ongoing staff development to encourage and model peer coaching and peer review? What is the administration's role? These questions must be addressed throughout the process of implementing peer coaching or peer review.

Resources

- ASCD – www.ascd.org
- National Mentoring Center – www.nwrel.org/mentoring

This information was adapted from the following resources:

- ASCD – Professional Development Strategies – www.ascd.org
- *Teaching to Win*. McQueen, C. (2001).

Study Groups
Embedded Professional Development

Overview

The information below was taken from *Study Groups Strengthening the Learning Community* by Bray, B. (2003).

Coaching teams and study groups can be the foundation of your professional development program (Joyce and Showers 1996) if they're built into the school day. This type of collegial work provides an opportunity for growth not realized when working in isolation in the classroom. Peer coaching teams can support teachers after the initial in-service with two to three teachers forming small study groups. Time needs to be built into the weekly schedule for these teachers to develop the shared language and common understanding which are necessary for acquiring new knowledge and skills. Usually, we teach skills without the knowledge base to implement the skills successfully. Larger study groups of teachers from different schools can focus monthly meetings on similar interests or projects. This study group, more like a user group, has the time to share projects, ideas, and invite experts to answer questions. A smaller study group where a coach is available to work one-on-one with the teacher will help them in the classroom. Modeling, observations, and on-going feedback give the teacher the support necessary for real change. Each teacher can keep a portfolio of work, ideas, and reflections to share in study groups.

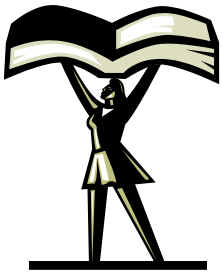
When these individuals come together and focus on student learning, the range of knowledge, resources, and experience they bring to the process are blended together for a more powerful impact on all of their students.

School Scenario

In the Central School District, teachers meet in grade-level groups once a week for an hour to collaboratively plan and discuss how Ruby Payne's work on children who live in poverty relates to their educational environment. This enables the teachers to better understand the obstacles they are presented with and the efforts it will take to overcome these challenges.

Each group maintains a log of what the teachers collaborate, what they discussed, and what new strategies they plan to implement before the next meeting. Teachers also provide examples of how the study group has impacted their classroom and instruction.

The Process



1. **Establish a regular meeting time**
   - Schedule frequent meetings for shorter time periods
   - No more than two weeks apart
   - One hour minimum – Two hour maximum
   - Focus is ALWAYS on improving instruction and student learning

2. **Establish Study Group Norms and Roles**

   NORMS
   - Study groups must set ground rules (norms)
   - Norms help clarify what is expected from all study group members

   ROLES
   - Team members must share the responsibility of the study group
   - Roles may be rotated among team members

3. **Develop an Action Plan for the Study Group**
   - Each study group should have its own action plan
   - Action plans help drive and direct the study group

4. **Focus on Instruction**
   - Don't get lost in administrative issues
   - Focus on CURRICULUM and INSTRUCTION implementing new and effective techniques
     - Providing coherent curriculum
     - Reaching ALL students' needs
     - Monitoring student progress

5. **Begin Meetings**
   - Rotate leadership
   - Document each meeting
   - Encourage all study group members to maintain personal logs
   - Set goals for each meeting

6. **Monitor Effectiveness**
   - Continually evaluate the effectiveness and progress of the study group
   - Look for evidence that…
     - Teachers are working together to deliver a coherent curriculum
     - Teaching practices have improved
     - Student achievement has increased

Resources

- Title I Resource Guide – www.nd.gov/dpi/uploads/1356/studygroups.pdf
- Learning Forward – http://learningforward.org

This information was adapted from the following resources:
- ENC Online – www.enc.org
- *Study Groups Strengthening the Learning Community* by Bray, B. (2003).
- *Study Groups*. Murphy, C. (1999).

Teacher Mentoring
Embedded Professional Development

Overview

In teacher mentoring programs, beginning teachers are paired with a more experienced teacher or, in some cases, with a team of experienced teachers, for guidance and support. Mentors are available to answer questions, observe classes, problem solve, and talk confidentially to new teachers about problems they may be facing in the classroom. The purpose of the relationship, ultimately, is not just to support the new teacher, but also to maximize his or her effectiveness in the classroom. Mentoring may occur as part of a larger induction program, or may be used separately as a means of supporting and retaining new teachers.

Mentoring is about teachers helping teachers. Mentoring addresses the specific needs of teachers new to a school, grade level, or curricular area by the mentor providing knowledge, advice, skills, and support. Both parties gain through interaction, reflection, and experimentation. Mentoring can only exist as long as both teachers derive mutual benefit and continue to grow in the professional relationship.

School Scenario

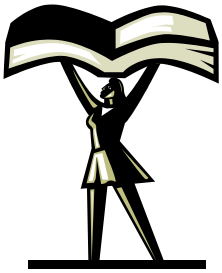
The district superintendent appoints a mentoring coordinator to provide human and material resources to new teachers within the district.

The mentoring coordinator establishes a cadre of exemplary, experienced teachers to serve as mentors. The coordinator approves mentor appointments and assignments, supports the mentors, arranges for planning and release time, arranges for teachers to visit other classrooms, supports mentoring budget, provides cultural and procedural orientation for new teachers, provides clear expectations and proper materials for new teachers, makes regular contact with new teachers, and provides a firewall between the mentor/mentee and teacher evaluators.

The mentors actively provide assistance, encouragement, support, and opportunities for the mentee. They may serve as a coach, consultant, advisor, sponsor, confidant, and teacher.

The mentees actively seek assistance and become involved in the school culture. They work cooperatively and collaboratively with their mentor.

The Process



Step 1: Understand the mentoring program.

- Guidelines, Roles, Responsibilities, and Expectations

Step 2: Establish a relationship with your mentee.

- Getting to Know Each Other
- Concerns of Beginning Teachers
- Needs Assessment for Beginning Teachers
- Monthly Mentoring Activities

Step 3: Convey professional responsibilities to mentee.

- Community Expectations
- Communicating with Families

Step 4: Manage the classroom environment

- Highlights of Classroom Management Strategies
- Ways to Connect with Students

Step 5: Develop a portrait of good teaching.

- Planning and Preparation
- Knowledge of Students
- Knowledge of Resources
- Setting Instructional Goals

Step 6: Guide teacher through self-assessment.

- Classroom Observation
- Coaching Skills
- Suggestions for Providing Feedback
- Teacher Self-Assessment Form

Step 7: Facilitate professional growth.

- Professional Organizations
- Professional Growth Resources

Resources

- The NEA Foundation – Mentoring Resources – www.neafoundation.org/pages/our-publications/
- North Dakota Education Standards and Practices Board (ESPB) Mentoring Program – www.nd.gov/espb/profdev/forms.html

Professional Portfolios
Embedded Professional Development

Overview

Professional portfolios are creative means of organizing, summarizing, and sharing artifacts, information, and ideas about teaching and/or learning, along with personal and professional growth.

Professional portfolios provide a unique portrait of the educator at different stages in his/her career. The teacher's involvement in education is reflected in the collection of data, which might include a resume, goal and philosophy statements, correspondence, professional development sessions attended, workshops delivered, and more. The contents are personally designed to give a unique view of the individual's talents and interests and focus is on personal and professional growth.

The contents encourage discussions with other colleagues about teaching and professional activities. These and other interactions may lead to long-range planning which could further enhance teaching practices and foster a desire for continuous improvement. Research indicates that self-determinations has a positive impact on professional growth.

Portfolios empower the professional to examine their beliefs about teaching and learning. Throughout the process of self-reflect, critical thinking, and goal setting a teacher will compile a professional growth portfolio.

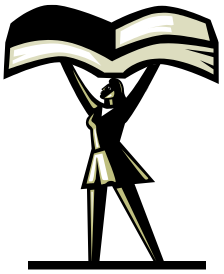
School Scenario

Jill is currently teaching chemistry and biology. She has a composite science major that has allowed her to teach both classes. With the new requirements of the *No Child Left Behind* Act, Jill will need to document major equivalency in the science subjects that she teaches. Even though she has 42 semester hours in science, she does not have a major in either chemistry or biology. Also, she does not have 32 semester hours in chemistry nor biology, so it will be necessary to complete the rubric for the chemistry major equivalency and again for the biology major equivalency. Jill will document her major equivalency by creating a professional portfolio.

Using the chart provided with the rubric, Jill determines how many points are required for a "major equivalency." Since she already has the composite major (42 semester hours), she will need to document that she has at least 12 semester hours in each individual subject. Using the chart, Jill reads that she will need to identify courses/activities that she can document for 36 points. She will complete one rubric for chemistry and another rubric for biology. Each rubric will need to be supported by evidence in that subject.

Jill begins the process of creating a record of specific accomplishments attained over the past years including background information, teaching artifacts, and reflections documenting extended teaching activities and professional information.

The Process



The professional teaching portfolio can be created and presented in many ways. The following outlines one way to proceed in creating a portfolio.

- Explain your educational philosophy and teaching goals.
- Choose specific features of your instruction program to document.
- Collect a wide range of artifacts, and date and annotate them so you have the information you need when making you final selections.
- Keep a journal to draw upon for written reflection on your teaching.
- Collaborate with a mentor and other colleagues (preferably, those who have experience in both teaching and portfolio construction). Meet regularly with

colleagues to discuss your portfolio.

- Assemble the portfolio in an easily accessible form. A loose-leaf notebook works well, although electronic portfolios may be the wave of the future.
- Assess the portfolio. You and your colleagues can assess the portfolio informally, or you can have it formally scored by the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards.

Resources

- Professional Portfolios for Teachers – www.vickiblackwell.com/portfoliolinks.html

Professional Development Website Resources

Upcoming NDDPI Events

- www.nd.gov/dpi/events/

Professional Development Links – National

- **NEA's Foundation for the Improvement of Education**
  www.nfie.org
- **PBS Teacher Resource**
  www.pbslearningmedia.org
- **Learning Forward**
  www.learningforward.org

Professional Development Links – North Dakota

- **North Dakota Curriculum Initiative**
  www.ndcurriculuminitiative.org
- **North Dakota Lead Center**
  www.ndlead.org